

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 27th December 2020

God's final plan completed

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You that whether we are in the church building together or thinking about You alone, You are with us and hear our prayers.

Help us to spend time each day singing your praises, reading and contemplating Your Word, praying for one another and those issues You bring to our attention. Amen

Song Praise, my soul, the King of heaven –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=GyRIVbdsi4c>

Prayers - In your own words just praise and thank the Lord, for who He is, for what He is, for what He has done. Confess your need of forgiveness.

Song I will give thanks to Thee –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYSy6uOGyA>

Prayers of Praise, Thanks and Intercession

Pray as you feel led. Finish with the Lord's Prayer.

Reading Revelation 21:1-8 *A New Heaven and a New Earth*

21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.”

Some thoughts

Once again we are in realm of prophecy, but whereas the prophesied birth of Jesus has happened, this is still in the future. We are in the age between Christ’s first coming and His second coming, which will eventually lead to the subject of this passage – a new heaven and a new earth.

As Christians this should be something we look forward to with excited anticipation. However, there is a slight dampener - we will not get there in our current bodies. We will need a new body to live in the Holy city, the new Jerusalem. The Bible book of Revelation tells us that between now and the appearing of the Holy City, there will be a great deal of suffering. We ourselves will only enter it via death, unless we are raptured beforehand.

Verse 7 reads ‘He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.’ So there is some overcoming to be done. Verse 8 lists some of the characteristics of those who do not overcome, including the ‘unbelieving’. So it is important that we retain our belief in Jesus, despite the challenges to our faith and persecutions we may experience.

As we face difficult times, I’m sure it’s OK to ask God to have mercy on us and allow us to live out our days in peace and comfort. But we should not be surprised if, like so many people now and in previous generations, events override our hopes and dreams. Whatever the future holds, we need to hold onto the fact that God has a plan for us, if we believe in Him, trust and obey.

Song I know who holds tomorrow -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7BtGs1w6hA>

This is a long term plan dating from the Creation of the world as described in the book of Genesis.

Reading Genesis 1:26-28, 31, 3:8-13, 3:17-24 *Creation, fall, curse*

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰ He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

¹¹ And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

¹² The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁷ To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’

“Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.”

²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²² And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

One of the many things that is amazing about this account of the creation of man, is that God appears to want a relationship with us. He made us in His image and originally He walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the beautiful garden He had created. It was the disobedience of Adam and Eve which broke this close relationship, following temptation by Satan, the Serpent. A battle has been raging ever since.

God subjected both the serpent and man to a curse. Man became mortal and was locked out of the garden.

But for reasons best known to Himself, God still wants a relationship with us and He has promised a new heaven and earth with a Holy City where we will dwell with Him for ever. It has taken a long time coming, (by our timescales), we still don't know when it will arrive, but come it will.

Our challenge is to stay faithful, be ready, be obedient, and genuinely look forward to His coming.

Song Surely Christ is coming -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuN3nMM_ZGE

Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us now and always.

AMEN

Robin